



# A Survey on Awareness of the Violence Link Across 10 Key Sectors

Survey Results and Summary

# Executive Summary

In Summer 2021, Humane Canada conducted a survey to measure knowledge and understanding of the Violence Link in ten key sectors<sup>1</sup> affected by the Violence Link. The survey measured knowledge and understanding of the Violence link, as well as seeking to understand prevalence, available resources, preferred resources, barriers to addressing the Violence Link, and support for federal government intervention. The survey also tested key messages in support of a forthcoming awareness campaign and educated participants on the Violence Link. 398 people participated in the survey.

Prior knowledge and understanding of the Violence Link were generally low with 37% of participants not having previously heard of the link, or having heard about it, but not really understanding what it was. It is worth noting that those who were familiar with and had an interest in the link were likely more inclined to participate in the survey.

In terms of prevalence, most encountered the Violence Link within their workplace one to four times per year, which is quite high. Generally, participants thought the Violence Link was relevant to them, especially among the animal and gender-based violence sectors.

Although around half of participants had a list of people they could reach out to in their workplace regarding the violence link, there was general dissatisfaction with the resources (or lack thereof) in the workplace. When asked what resources would be most useful to them, the three most cited resources were e-learning, written materials, and support with collaboration from other sectors.

The most cited barriers to adopting Violence Link policy in these sectors included lack of awareness and time/resources, which points to the need for more targeted awareness initiatives.

There was overwhelming support for federal government intervention in addressing the violence link.

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<sup>1</sup> Animal welfare; Animal enforcement; Gender-based violence (GBV) sector; Healthcare; Police; Animal care professionals; Social services; Victim services; Educators; Prosecutors

# Introduction and Purpose

The relationship among violence against people and animals is commonly known as the Violence Link. Research shows that violence toward people (interpersonal violence) and animal maltreatment are part of a larger pattern of violent crimes that co-exist. Cases of intimate partner violence, sexual abuse, and child abuse (including child sexual abuse), gang violence, youth crime, organized crime, assault, homicide, weapons, and illicit drugs also commonly involve animal abuse<sup>2</sup>.



Figure 1.  
Dr. Rochelle Stevenson, Connected Violence: The History, or Present and the Hope for the Future

The Canadian Violence Link Coalition (CVLC) was formed in 2018 as a result of issues brought forward at Humane Canada's 2017 Canadian Violence Link Conference.

The Canadian Violence Link Coalition recognizes the link between interpersonal abuse and animal abuse as well as the intersection of vulnerabilities in both populations. Despite evidence illustrating that better outcomes are achieved when a cross sectoral approach is adopted, animal abuse and human abuse are legislated for and dealt with separately. Further, lack of awareness, education and training on the Violence Link inhibits collaboration between sectors.

2 [Humane Canada, Review of the Violence Link Literature, 2020](#)

The CVLC's purpose is to bring together stakeholders who are interested in confronting the human-animal Violence Link in order to bring about systemic, lasting change by:

- Engaging with law and policy makers on relevant legislative and policy developments that recognize the Violence Link
- Advancing awareness about the Violence Link among stakeholders through educational and awareness campaigns, conferences, workshops, and other similar initiatives
- Advancing awareness of the Violence Link and available resources among the Canadian public, for example with respect to specific Violence Link cases
- Encouraging a cross-sectoral approach by providing resources and tools for regional coalitions and networks which address the Violence Link on a community basis such as cross reporting tools

In 2021 we set out to undertake the first national survey measuring knowledge of the Violence Link among stakeholders within Canada.

The goals of the survey were to answer the following questions:

- What do people within each sector know about the Violence Link?
- What information would make them incorporate Violence Link policies and practices into their work?
- Which resources do people want/need in order to incorporate Violence Link policies and practices into their work?
- What are the barriers to incorporating Violence Link policies and practices into their work and workplaces?

This survey also asked respondents to assess potential messages that could be used for the development of subsequent campaign to raise awareness of the Violence Link among key affected sectors.

## Team

The team consisted of the following:

- Hannah Brown, Manager, Criminal Justice System Reform Program, Humane Canada
- Dr. Kendra Coulter, Associate Professor and Department Chair, Labour Studies at Brock University and AIPARG (Animal and Interpersonal Abuse Research Group) member
- Dr. Amy Fitzgerald, Professor, Department of Sociology, Anthropology, and Criminology at the University of Windsor and AIPARG member
- Louise Lathey, Outreach Specialist in Violence Prevention, BC SPCA

Ms. Brown and Ms. Lathey are co-chairs of the Canadian Violence Link Coalition (CVLC) Steering Committee, a Humane Canada initiative, and Dr Coulter and Dr Fitzgerald are members of the CVLC Steering Committee and (subsequently) the Strategic Planning Committee.

# Methodology

## Selected professional sectors

A range of factors affected which sectors were selected for this project:

- Having pre-existing contacts within that sector within the CVLC, for example police, animal welfare etc.;
- Likelihood of being receptive to a survey, for example the judiciary were excluded from the survey as it was considered unlikely that we would get any meaningful uptake in that sector;
- Likelihood of being receptive to the consequential awareness campaign.

The 10 professional sectors targeted by this survey were as follows:

- Animal welfare
- Animal care professionals
- Animal enforcement
- Social services
- Gender-based violence (GBV) sector
- Victim services
- Healthcare
- Educators
- Police
- Prosecutors

A standard set of survey questions based on the purposes of the survey were created. All questions were generic except for:

- Questions 6, 7 & 8 which include sector specific examples of animal abuse, interpersonal violence, and the Violence Link
- Questions 16 & 17 testing key messages
- Some demographic questions for example for animal care professionals (which animals), police (which unit), healthcare workers (which sector/setting) and GBV (which type of organization).

In order to create the sector specific questions, we conducted multiple interviews with sector representatives and then tailored the questions accordingly.

## Survey software and incentives

The survey questions were loaded onto Qualtrics, and participants were sent a link through which they were able to select their particular sector and therefore take the survey relevant to them.

After completing the entire survey, participants were given the option to enter into a draw to win tickets to the 2021 National Violence Link Conference and the 2022 Humane Canada Summit. Only at this point were participants asked to provide their contact details, and this data was held separately from the main survey data, to ensure anonymity of the main survey responses.

## Disseminating the survey

It was decided early on not to publicly post the survey link as there was a concern that, given the prize draw, that a number of uninterested or irrelevant parties would complete the survey incorrectly to gain access to the prize draw.

Instead, the authors utilized their networks, as well as the network of the CVLC, to disseminate the survey as widely as possible. A number of emails were sent out explaining the purpose of the survey and the opportunity to enter the prize draw.

# Survey Results

## Participants by sector

There was a total of 398 completed responses as follows:

PARTICIPANT'S SECTOR	COUNT	PERCENT
Animal Welfare	65	16.3%
Animal Enforcement	34	8.5%
Gender Based Violence Sector	59	14.8%
Healthcare Workers	16	4.0%
Police	40	10.1%
Animal Care Professionals	67	16.8%
Social Services	37	9.3%
Victim Services	35	8.8%
Educators	27	6.8%
Prosecutors	18	4.5%
<b>Total:</b>	<b>398</b>	<b>100%</b>

## Demographic characteristics of the sample

The range of years worked in sector was from 0.3 years to 47 years, with a median of 12.625 years. This represents a high level of experience and suggests that those participating were drawing from and building on many years of experience.

Of those who identified their gender, 318 identified as female, 68 identified as male and one as non-binary. Ten selected the prefer not to answer option. Overall, just under 80% of participants self-identified as female, a result that was expected due to the higher number of self-identifying females within certain sectors, such as GBV where 57 identified as female, 0 identified as male and only 2 preferred not to answer. The only sector with gender-balance was the police, with 19 identifying as female, 19 identifying as male, and one preferring not to answer. In none of the sectors were there more individuals self-identifying as men than women.

Most survey participants were located in Ontario (221 or 55.5%), followed by BC (67 or 16.8%) and Alberta (32 or 8%). There were no responses from participants in Northwest Territories, Nunavut, or Yukon. There was only one response from Newfoundland. This is a predictable result given population distributions across Canada, the fact that the survey was only available in English, and the location of the co-authors (Dr Fitzgerald, Dr Coulter and Ms. Brown in Ontario and Ms. Lathey in BC).

## Question 1:

# Concern for interpersonal violence

### 1. To what extent do you agree with the following statement?

“Interpersonal violence is a matter of concern to me” (interpersonal violence defined as violence between individuals, namely family and intimate partner violence and community violence (acquaintance and stranger violence) which includes child maltreatment; intimate partner violence; elder abuse; youth violence; assault by strangers; violence related to property crimes; and violence in workplaces and other institutions)

72% strongly agreed, 24% agreed, 3% were neutral and only 1% disagreed or strongly disagreed that interpersonal violence was a concern for them. We also tested group differences to see if there were statistically significant differences between the sectors. Compared to the median, those in the gender-based violence sectors and healthcare sectors were more likely to strongly agree with the statement that interpersonal violence is a concern to them, compared to animal welfare and animal care professionals who were less likely, although animal welfare and animal care professionals were more likely to agree with the statement than the median. Educators were more likely to strongly disagree that interpersonal violence was of concern to them than the median.

GROUP TESTING (Significant based on adjusted standardized residual >±2)	
Strongly Agree	More than expected: Gender-based Violence; Health care Less than expected: Animal Welfare; Animal care
Agree	More than expected: Animal Welfare; Animal care Less than expected: Gender-based Violence; Health care
Neutral	More than expected: Less than expected:
Disagree	More than expected: Animal care Less than expected:
Strongly Disagree	More than expected: Educators Less than expected:
Don't Know	More than expected: Victim Services Less than expected:
$\chi^2$	97.756 ( $\phi \leq 0.000$ )

# Question 2: Concern for animal abuse

## 2. To what extent do you agree with the following statement?

“The welfare of animals is a matter of concern to me” (animal welfare defined as the health and wellbeing of animals with respect to physical and/or mental needs, and/or the extent to which their nature (genetic traits manifested in breed and temperament) are satisfied)

83% strongly agreed, 16% agreed, 1% were neutral and no one disagreed with the statement that the welfare of animals is a concern for them. We also tested group differences here, but we had to collapse some of the response categories as there was not a lot of variation among the groups because such a large proportion stated that they agreed with the statement. There were no statistically significant differences to report.

GROUP TESTING (Significant based on adjusted standardized residual $>\pm 2$ )	
Strongly Agree	More than expected: Animal Welfare; Animal care Less than expected: Health care; Police; Educators
Agree/Neutral	More than expected: Health care; Police; Educators Less than expected: Animal Welfare; Animal care
$X^2$	48.942 ( $\phi \leq 0.000$ )



# Question 3: Prior knowledge of the Violence Link

## 3. Which of the following best represents your current understanding of the Violence Link?

- I hadn't heard of the Violence Link until this survey
- I have heard of the Violence Link, but I do not really know what it is
- The Violence Link is the link between people who are cruel to animals and then go on to become serial killers
- The Violence Link is the relationship between violence against people and violence against animals in any context
- Other (please specify)

37% hadn't heard of the Violence Link, or they had heard about it, but didn't really understand what it was. This was a surprisingly high result given the likely bias in this survey in that those who were responding likely tended to towards an interest in the Violence Link. Approximately 2% thought that the violence link is specific to serial killers, which does not fully encapsulate what the Violence Link is. Whereas 61% understood it more generally, as the relationship between violence against people and animals in any context.

In terms of the group testing, the animal welfare and gender-based violence sectors were less likely to lack working knowledge of the Violence Link. The animal sectors were more likely to understand the violent link as more encompassing than some of the other sectors. This is likely because they're seeing a whole spectrum of animal maltreatment in their work.

GROUP TESTING (Significant based on adjusted standardized residual >±2)	
I hadn't heard of the Violence Link until this survey	More than expected: Health care; Social Services; Educators Less than expected: Animal Welfare; Gender Based Violence
I have heard of the Violence Link but I do not really know what it is	More than expected: Less than expected: Animal Welfare
The Violence Link is the link between people who are cruel to animals and then go on to become serial killers	More than expected: Gender-based Violence Less than expected: Health care; Police; Educators
The Violence Link is the relationship between violence against people and violence against animals in any context	More than expected: Animal Welfare; Animal Enforcement Less than expected: Health care; Social Services; Educators
$\chi^2$	87.374 ( $\Phi \leq 0.000$ )

## Question 4:

# Violence Link crimes

### 4. The following crimes can involve animals (tick all that apply)

- Intimate partner violence (including domestic violence)
- Gang violence
- Youth crime
- Organized crime (defined here as migrant smuggling, trafficking, identity theft, sexual exploitation of children on the Internet, the production and smuggling of counterfeit goods and money, motor vehicle theft)
- Assault
- Homicide, including serial killings
- Sexual assault
- Child abuse
- Weapons offences
- Illicit drugs (production and/or distribution)
- Elder abuse
- Don't know

When asking which crimes could involve the Violence link, the animal welfare, animal enforcement and GBV sectors were more likely to check all of the crimes than the other sectors. There was also fairly high endorsement across the board from the police sector, although weapons offences were less frequently endorsed. There was generally highest endorsement of IPV (92%) as a specific offence intersecting with animal abuse, and overall the lowest endorsement was for weapons (72%).



## Question 5:

# Knowledge of the Violence link prior to taking the survey

### 5. The Violence Link is the connection between violence against animals and violence against humans. The harm may occur one at a time or at the same time.

Cases of intimate partner violence, gang violence, youth crime, organized crime, assault, homicide, sexual assault and child abuse, weapons and illicit drugs also commonly involve animal abuse. Violence Link crimes can victimize some of the most vulnerable in our society.

Perpetrators use animal abuse to manipulate, control, and intimidate partners or ex-partners, children, and/or elders to be silent about their abuse, prevent them from leaving, and/or force them to return.

Prior to starting this survey, how knowledgeable were you on the Violence Link on a scale of 1-10, where 1 is not knowledgeable at all, 10 is expert level knowledge?

In terms of self-reporting knowledge of the violence link, animal welfare, animal enforcement and the GBV sectors reported relatively greater knowledge. Animal care professionals were not as high as the other animal sectors. At the low end of self-reporting were educators, which is not surprising given that in a subsequent question we learned that they were less likely to receive on the job training on the Violence Link.

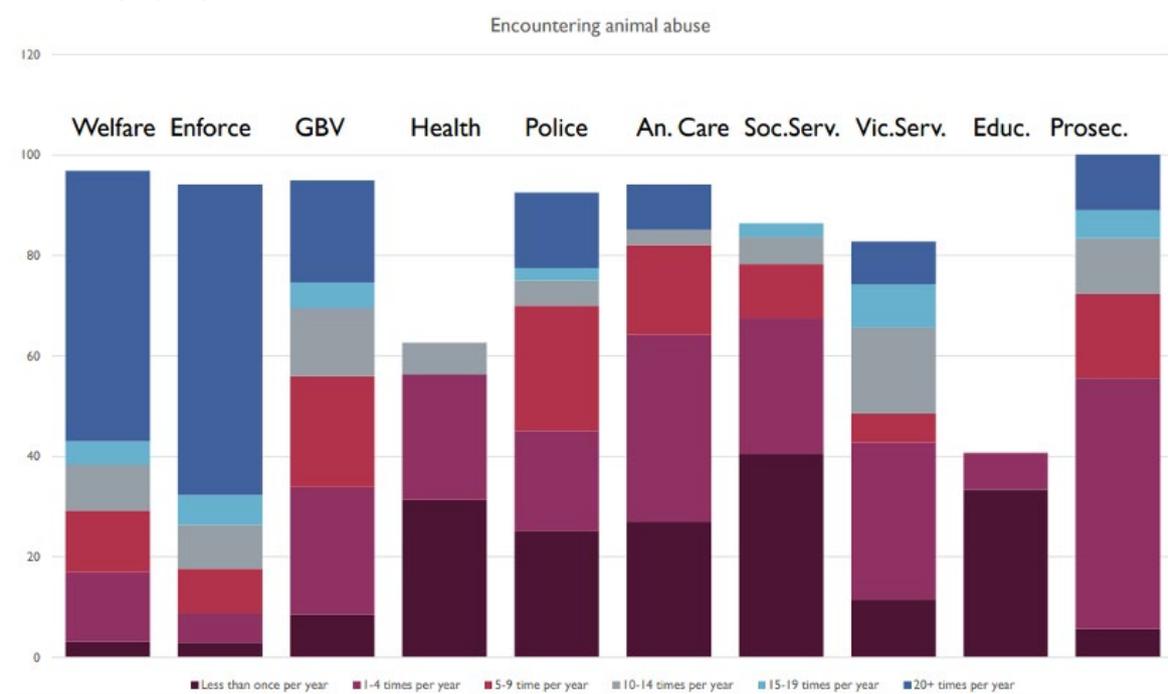
PARTICIPANT'S SECTOR	RATING MEDIAN	GROUP TESTING (POST HOC RESULTS)
Animal Welfare	7.00	Higher than Educators (+3.1)
Animal Enforcement	7.00	Higher than Educators (+2.8)
Gender Based Violence Sector	7.00	Higher than Educators (+2.4) Higher than Educators (+3.2)
Healthcare Workers	4.50	Lower than GBV (-2.4)
Police	6.00	
Animal Care Professionals	6.00	Higher than Educators (+2.1)
Social Services	5.00	
Victim Services	7.00	Higher than Educators (+2.7)
Educators	2.00	Lower than Animal Welfare (-3.1) Lower than Animal Enforcement (-2.8) Lower than GBV (-3.2) Lower than Animal Care (-2.1) Lower than Victim Services (-2.7) Lower than Prosecutors (-2.7)
Prosecutors	7.00	Higher than Educators (+2.7)
<b>Total:</b>	<b>7.00</b>	<b>F=5.649 (p&lt;0.000)</b>

# Question 6: Prevalence of animal abuse at work

## 6. How often do you encounter or are made aware of alleged, potential, or actual animal abuse in your work?

Followed by sector-specific example, for example for educators the example was “a student tells you that they saw their parent kick the family dog”

- Less than once per year
- 1-4 times per year
- 5-9 times per year
- 10-14 times per year
- 15-19 times per year
- 20+ times per year
- Don't know



The animal sectors reported high exposure (mostly 20+ times per year) to animal abuse in their work, which is not surprising, except for the animal care professionals' sector, which reported less than the other animal sectors. The gender-based violence sector reported quite high in frequent encounters with animal abuse in their work. Overall, across the entire sample the most common response was that individuals encounter animal abuse one to four times per year in their work, and the second most common response was 20 + times per year, which is extremely high. Healthcare, social services and educators were more likely to encountering animal abuse less than once a year. Animal welfare and animal enforcement were statistically more likely to report it encountering it 20 + times per year.

## Question 7:

# Prevalence of interpersonal violence at work

### 7. How often do you encounter or are made aware of alleged, potential, or actual interpersonal violence in your work? (Interpersonal violence defined as previously)

Followed by sector-specific example, for example for educators the example was “a student tells you that he saw his father hit his mother.”

- Less than once per year
- 1-4 times per year
- 5-9 times per year
- 10-14 times per year
- 15-19 times per year
- 20+ times per year
- Don't know

Overall, across the entire sample the most common response was that individuals encounter interpersonal violence 20+ times per year in their work, which is extremely high. This was particularly the case for those in the GBV and prosecutor sectors. Among the animal sectors, they were most likely to report interpersonal violence 1 to 4 times or less than once per year.

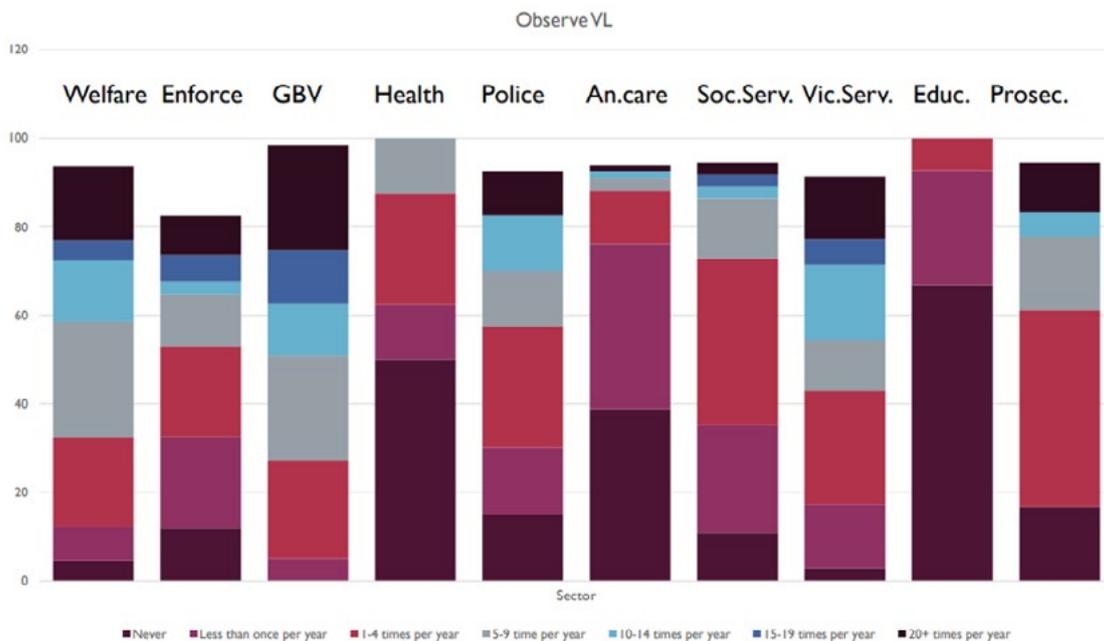


# Question 8: Prevalence of the Violence Link at work

8. The Violence Link is the connection between violence against animals and violence against humans (hover for a fuller definition of the Violence Link). How often do you encounter or are made aware of alleged, potential, or actual Violence Link cases in your work?

Followed by sector-specific example, for example for educators the example was “a student tells you that they are being bullied and that their pets are being threatened”.

- Less than once per year
- 1-4 times per year
- 5-9 times per year
- 10-14 times per year
- 15-19 times per year
- 20+ times per year
- Don't know



This graph depicts how often individuals observe the violence link in their work. Overall, the most common response was one to four times per year. Among the statistically significant differences, we found that the health care, animal care professionals and educator sectors were more likely to report encountering the Violence Link less than once a year. The prosecutors encountered the Violence Link one to nine times per year, which is greater than expected. The animal welfare sector, victim service, and gender-based violence sectors encountered the Violence Link 10 or more times per year, which was greater than expected. The gender-based violence sector was the only sector that did not have at least one participant encountering the Violence Link per year.

## Question 9: Relevance of the Violence Link to work

### 9. The Violence Link is the connection between violence against animals and violence against humans. On a scale of 1 to 10, with 1 not at all and 10 very relevant, how relevant would you say the Violence Link is to your work?

In assessing how relevant the Violence Link is to their work, the gender-based violence sector had the highest median and mean scores. Their scores are actually higher than the animal sectors, which we think is reflective of the work being done within the gender-based violence sector and the amount of research that's been done on the Violence Link specific to intimate partner violence. In terms of statistical differences between the sectors, there was a lot of variation, which made it easier to discern the differences. Animal welfare enforcement and gender-based violence reported significantly higher relevance of the Violence Link than any others. The healthcare, social services, and educator sectors were relatively low; however, it is worth noting that the sectors that were low on this measure also reported relatively less self-reported knowledge of the violence link, which can certainly impact recognizing it in one's own work.

PARTICIPANT'S SECTOR	RATING RANGE	RATING MEDIAN	RATING MEAN	GROUP TESTING (POST HOC RESULTS)
Animal Welfare	9 (1-10)	8.00	7.92	Higher than Health care (+2.7) Higher than Social Services(+1.7) Higher than Educators (+3.3)
Animal Enforcement	8 (2-10)	9.00	8.44	Higher than Health care (+3.2) Higher than Animal Care (+1.8) Higher than Social Services(+2.3) Higher than Educators (+3.8)
Gender Based Violence Sector	8 (2-10)	10.00	8.81	Higher than Health care (+3.6) Higher than Animal Care (+2.1) Higher than Social Services(+2.6) Higher than Educators (+4.2)
Healthcare Workers	9 (1-10)	5.00	5.25	Lower than Animal Welfare (-2.7) Lower than Animal Enforcement (-3.2) Lower than Victim Services (-3.2) Lower than Prosecutors (-2.4)
Police	9 (1-10)	7.50	7.38	Higher than Educators (+2.8)
Animal Care Professionals	9 (1-10)	7.00	6.69	Lower than Animal Enforcement (-1.8) Lower than GBV (-2.1) Lower than Victim Services (-1.8) Higher than Educators (+3.9)
Social Services	8 (2-10)	6.00	6.19	Lower than Animal Welfare (-1.7) Lower than Animal Enforcement (-2.3) Lower than GBV (-2.6) Lower than Victim Services (-2.3)
Victim Services	6 (4-10)	9.00	8.49	Higher than Health care (+3.2) Higher than Social Services(+2.3) Higher than Educators (+3.9)
Educators	8 (2-10)	6.00	6.19	Lower than Animal Welfare (-3.3) Lower than Animal Enforcement (-3.8) Lower than GBV (-4.2) Lower than Police (-2.8) Lower than Animal Care (-2.1) Lower than Victim Services (-3.9) Lower than Prosecutors (-3.0)
Prosecutors	7 (3-10)	7.50	7.61	Higher than Educators (+3.0)
<b>Total:</b>	<b>9 (1-10)</b>	<b>8.00</b>	<b>7.38</b>	<b>F=11.68(φ&lt;0.000)</b>

## Question 10:

# Resources currently available in the workplace

### 10. What resources do you currently have in your workplace to help deal with Violence Link cases in your work? Select all that apply.

- We have a list of contacts at the local agencies that can assist
- We have a local Violence Link coalition or network
- There are written materials on the Violence Link in my workplace
- Training on the Violence Link has been provided
- Training on the Violence Link is going to be provided
- There are no Violence Link resources in my workplace
- There is a colleague who is a subject expert at my work
- Other (please specify)
- Don't know

The most common Violence Link resource (reported by 50% of the sample) was a list of people an employee could reach out to for assistance. This was followed by 28% of the sample reporting they had already received Violence link training. It is noteworthy that 22% reported having no Violence Link resources in their workplace, most commonly reported by healthcare workers and prosecutors.

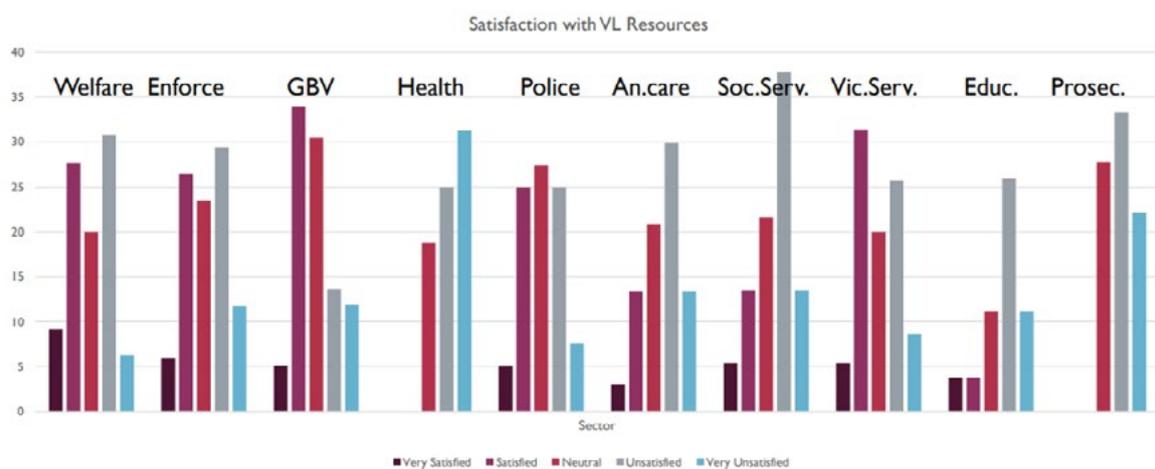
Most qualitative, written responses referred to contacts in their communities and “Safe Pet” or fostering programs for survivors of intimate partner violence. Surprisingly two educators noted that they had guidance through the school office, and that they trained their students on the Violence Link. One police sector participant notes that the Violence Link is included in situational assessments of domestic violence investigations.



# Question 11: Satisfaction with current resources in workplace

## 11. How satisfied are you with the resources available to you in your workplace to deal with Violence Link cases?

- Satisfied
- Neutral
- Unsatisfied
- Very unsatisfied
- Don't know
- Not applicable



Only 5% reported being satisfied with current Violence Link resources in their workplace, whereas most were unsatisfied or very unsatisfied. There were not many statistical differences between the sectors, which is at least partially attributed to the considerable number of participants who were unsatisfied with the resources in their workplace.

## Question 12:

# Resources which would be useful

### 12. What resources would assist you in dealing with Violence Link cases in your workplace? Select all that apply.

- Instructor-led training (e.g., presentations, workshops etc.)
- e-learning (i.e., technology-based learning available anytime, anywhere, to learn at your own pace such as videos, interactive scenarios etc.)
- Support with collaborating with other agencies in other sectors
- Written materials (e.g., leaflets, posters, manuals, information sheets etc.)
- Workplace specific policies and procedures making clear management/leadership expectation
- Cross-reporting tools
- Violence Link expert within the workplace
- Access to consultation and support from violence link experts
- Other (please specify)
- Don't know

In terms of the Violence Link resources which participants thought would be most useful, the top three resources were e-learning (i.e., technology-based learning available anytime, anywhere, to learn at your own pace such as videos, interactive scenarios etc.), written materials (e.g., leaflets, posters manuals, information sheet etc.,) and support with collaboration with other sectors.

Most qualitative responses wanted contact details of appropriate third parties in their communities (such as a contact for a pet fostering program), particularly in the case of an emergency. One animal care professional sector participant noted that once the client leaves the clinic, fear can cause them to return to the abuser.

## Question 13: What Violence link crimes would participants like to know more about

**13. What Violence Link crimes (with respect to animal cruelty/abuse) would you like to learn more about? Select all that apply.**

- Intimate partner violence (including domestic violence)
- Gang violence
- Youth crime
- Organized crime (defined as above)
- Assault
- Homicide, including serial killings
- Sexual assault
- Child abuse
- Weapons offences
- Illicit drugs (production and/or distribution)
- Elder abuse
- All of the above
- Don't know

The most frequent response (53%) was “all of the above,” but outside of that, the most requested areas for more knowledge were intimate partner violence (including domestic violence) and child abuse.



## Question 14:

# Current barriers to adopting or enhancing policies and procedures that incorporate the Violence Link

**14. What is currently preventing or hindering you from adopting or enhancing policies and procedures that incorporate the Violence Link into your work? Please select all that apply.**

- I had not heard of/I had not properly understood the Violence Link until now
- Lack of buy in from management/leadership
- Lack of buy in from colleagues
- Lack of support and/or understanding from stakeholders in other sectors
- Lack of resources to collaborate with other sectors
- Lack of clear guidance about what policies and procedures should be (e.g., from governing bodies)
- Lack of comprehensive and/or ongoing training
- Lack of time and/or resources to adopt or enhance Violence Link policies and procedures
- I hadn't tried to do so before
- Other (please specify)
- Don't know
- I am not interested in policies and procedures that incorporate the Violence Link into my work

The number one barrier for animal welfare, animal enforcement, police and victim services was the lack of time and/or resources. The number one barrier for the gender-based violence, healthcare, social services, and educator sectors was that they had not heard of or properly understood the Violence Link until this survey. This points to the importance of awareness work. For animal care professionals and prosecutors, their main response was that they had not tried to incorporate the Violence Link into policies and procedures to date. Overall, the most common barrier was not having heard of or had not properly understood the Violence Link, followed by lack of time or resources.

Of the qualitative responses, one police sector participant noted that there is insufficient reporting of the Violence Link, and that reporting is needed to demonstrate that greater need for training exists. One educator participant communicated a need for general information and specific resources along with guest speakers. One participant from the gender-based violence sector notes challenges supporting survivors with livestock and limited animal safekeeping resources in rural communities.

## Question 15:

# Role of the federal government

### 15. Please indicate how much you agree/disagree with the following statement:

“The Government of Canada should dedicate resources to confronting the Violence Link”

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree
- Don't know
- Prefer not to say

There was strong endorsement of our question asking if the federal government should be providing some support regarding the Violence Link. All sectors apart from prosecutors checked strongly agree most commonly. Together, strongly agree and agree account for 91% of responses, and no one strongly disagreed. This is an important finding as it is uncommon to get such agreement on these types of survey questions.



# Questions 16 & 17:

## Testing key messages

These were Sector specific questions testing what key messages would resonate for the particular sector in question.

We set out below the 3 key messages which appeared to resonate the most with the various sectors.

### **Educators**

An understanding of the Violence Link will help me:

- Better protect vulnerable children/youths by understanding what signs to look for, and what questions to ask
- Understand some of the other factors outside my classroom that may be affected my students' mental health
- Uphold my professional and ethical responsibilities and thereby support the reputation of my profession

### **Victim Services**

An understanding of the Violence Link will help me:

- Better protect vulnerable people such as children, women, and elders by understanding what signs to look for and what questions to ask
- Provide more comprehensive safety/security planning for my clients that accommodates all their needs
- Better understand clients who have pets

### **Social services**

An understanding of the Violence Link will help me:

- Raise awareness of the Violence link in my workplace and in my community
- Better protect vulnerable people such as children, women, and elders by understanding what signs to look for and what questions to ask
- Better protect animals by understanding what signs to look for, and what questions to ask

### **Animal care professionals**

An understanding of the Violence Link will help me:

- Better protect animals (including other animals that may be affected for example in the same household)

- Uphold my professional and ethical responsibilities, and therefore support the reputation of my profession
- Support the ethical culture and wellbeing of my practice team by ensuring that appropriate actions (such as reporting abuse) are consulted on and agreed in advance

## Prosecutors

If I understand the Violence Link:

- And the judicial options to address this, I will be able to propose better sentencing options that protect victims from further harm
- I am more likely to be able to fulfil my ethical and legal duty to obtain justice
- And bring it to the attention of the court in applicable cases, I am more likely to obtain a proportionate sentence for the crime

## Police

An understanding of the Violence Link will help me:

- Better protect animals by understanding what signs to look for, and what questions to ask
- Better protect vulnerable people such as children, women, and elders by understanding what signs to look for, and what questions to ask
- Integrate my practice with other service providers in my community so that I can provide better information and resources

## Healthcare workers

An understanding of the Violence Link will help me:

- Better protect vulnerable people such as children, women, and elders by understanding what signs to look for, and what questions to ask
- Integrate my practice with other service providers in my community so that I can provide useful information and resources to those who are accessing our care and services
- Raise awareness of the Violence Link in my workplace

## Gender-based violence sector

An understanding of the Violence Link will help me:

- Integrate my practice with other service providers in my community so that I can provide useful information and resources to clients that can help them make the best decisions for themselves
- Better protect animals by understanding what signs to look for and what questions to ask
- Raise awareness of the Violence Link in my workplace and in my community

## Animal enforcement <sup>3</sup>

An understanding of the Violence Link will help me:

- Better protect vulnerable people such as children, women, and elders by understanding what signs to look for, and what questions to ask
- Better protect animals
- Integrate my practice with other service providers in my community so that I can provide better information and resources

## Animal welfare

An understanding of the Violence Link will help me:

- Better protect vulnerable people such as children, women, and elders by understanding what signs to look for, and what questions to ask
- Uphold my professional and ethical responsibilities, and thereby support the reputation of animal welfare organizations
- Better protect animals



<sup>3</sup> Please note that there was a slight issue with this question in that “strongly disagree” was included instead of “strongly agree” (i.e., strongly disagree was included twice). This does not appear to have affected survey responses with participants answering as though the question was worded correctly.

## Question 18:

# Open-ended question

### 18. Is there anything you would like to add or recommend (e.g., examples, insights, experiences etc.)?

There were a substantial number of qualitative comments in response to this question. Of note are the following:

- The vast majority of people in crisis will not seek help for themselves without first ensuring that their pets will have help first. There is a lack of safe places where pets can be taken. One participant reported seeing an abused woman live out of her car with their pet. Participants were keen for “SafePet” and fostering programs and one noted that there is a lack of sheltering that accommodates pets once victims leave the shelter.
- Judges need to take animal abuse and the Violence Link seriously – there was frustration expressed here.
- It would be useful to have protocols in place in vet clinics
- Training including sample dialogues and examples would be useful
- There is a need for information sharing and cross reporting between agencies. Organizations need to work together.
- There should be mandated training on the Violence Link for police
- Research on what effect the Violence Link has in terms of recidivism would be useful.



# Conclusions

Animal welfare, animal enforcement, and the gender-based violence sectors appear to be the most well versed on the Violence Link.

Common barriers to integrating Violence Link knowledge are a lack of awareness of the Violence Link and a lack of time and resources. This means that we cannot expect the knowledge and action to simply emerge from the ground up. The Work of Humane Canada and the Canadian Violence Link Coalition is key.

There was overwhelming support for federal government support for interventions on the Violence Link.

There is a significant need for additional research on the Violence Link, although this is challenging as official data are missing. Instead, other strategies for research such as self-report surveys are needed, as per the work of the Animal and Inter-personal Abuse Research Group (AIPARG) at the University of Windsor.

## Next Steps

The survey showed that the top 3 barriers to implementing VL policies and procedures were:

- Time and resources
- Had not heard of the Violence Link – need more awareness
- Had not tried to implement Violence Link policies and procedures

Further, the top 3 requested resources were

- E-learning
- Written materials
- Support with collaboration

Humane Canada has a number of initiatives planned that will seek to address these issues.

Firstly, it is evident that while some sectors have a good understanding of the Violence Link, we still need to work on raising awareness.

We have therefore taken the results of the awareness survey, including the key messages, to a communications firm and are working with them to create a series of awareness materials that are targeted at specific sectors and which “speak to” those sectors. We will be leveraging our current network to spread the word, providing sectors with shareable materials that quickly and easily explain what the Violence Link is, and why people should take notice.

Second, in order to meet the request for e-learning and written materials, in 2022 Humane Canada will be launching an online Violence Link training program which will consist of a series of webinars which busy professionals can work through in their own time. This will be supported by further written educational materials on our website that will serve as an online resource centre

Lastly, the survey showed that people need tools and resources to help them collaborate. We know that working together and breaking down silos is important, but for busy professionals, they need the support to help them do that.

Humane Canada has secured funding to raise awareness and provide practical tools to tackle one aspect of the Violence Link which we are told stakeholders frequently face – women with animals experiencing gender-based violence.

We know that a significant portion of women experiencing GBV confront an inadequate system that disadvantages women with animals. Often women's shelters do not take in pets, and women are faced with the impossible choice of leaving behind their pet with their abuser or staying and enduring more abuse. There are even greater barriers when the animals are farm animals in rural areas.

With a grant from Women and Gender Equality's (WAGE) Feminist Response and Recovery Fund, next year we will be launching a 2.5-year project - ACT (Awareness, Collaboration and Tools) for Women with Animals Experiencing GBV.

Through this project Humane Canada will:

- Firstly, raise awareness about the Violence Link for sectors engaging with women experiencing GBV and safety planning.
- Secondly, develop an adaptable collaborative response model (ACRM) consisting of community-based collaboration tools, for example, intake and communication protocols, self-assessment tools, referral processes, models for shelters allowing co-location and collaboration agreements to help set up a community-based foster program. These materials will also be adapted to underrepresented groups of women, including OLMC, Indigenous and rural women.

And thirdly, provide education, tools, resources, and access to the ACRM to affected sectors, including via an online learning centre and regional workshops.

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